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Native Franchise:

Mr. Theo. Schreiner's Views.

What Mr. Rhodes Said.

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TO THE EDITOR "TRANSVAAL LEADER."

Sir,—Will you give me space in your widely-read columns to deal with some of the points raised by Mr. F. W. Bell in his paper on the native question, report of which appears in your issue of the 16th inst.?

It seems to me unfair and unstatesmanlike to lump all natives together and refuse to differentiate between those who are really civilised and educated and the mass who are still in a state of barbarism; and Mr. Bell goes further, cites Mr. Rhodes as having done the same, and quotes his words with regard to the latter class as if they applied to the former. Now, Mr. Rhodes held, as every sensible man must, that natives living in a state of barbarism are not entitled to the franchise, though they may be allowed some form of representation, but he never favoured the exclusion of any civilised man from eligibility for the franchise.

Mr. Bell says that "Mr. Rhodes admitted that the coloured man section could not legitimately be excluded from political

rights," but adds that when "he declared that he would not disfranchise a man on account of the colour of his skin" he had "obviously the coloured problem, but not that of the native, in his mind." Why obviously? Mr. Bell is begging the question. I challenge him to point out any words of Mr. Rhodes which show that he wished civilised natives to be excluded from political privileges which he was willing that coloured people should have. In 1887 he said: "I do not go so far as the hon. member for Victoria West, who would not give the black man a vote. All I say is that you must treat the natives as a subject people as long as they continue in a state of barbarism and communal tenure." In 1891 he said: "I have before said that I could never accept the position that we should disqualify a human being on account of his colour, but I think we shall be right in considering the question of a higher franchise." The only occasion that I know of on which Mr. Rhodes spoke publicly of natives and coloured people separately in connection with the franchise was at Klipdam, August 1 or 2, 1898, when he was reported as follows:—"I have carefully thought over the matter. I see that you will have to treat these pure native races as children until they are educated. But when they are educated you must not make any difference as to colour. You must give them the franchise, as I gave it to the educated coloured people in the Bill which had the approval of Mr. Hofmeyr. We must not alter that. . . . The only solution is representation on the basis of education, property and labour. . . Now we pass from the aboriginal native to the coloured man. The coloured men have been asking me to-day whether I had ever said, 'Equal rights for every

white man south of the Zambesi.' I said, 'Yes; I have used that word "white" in antithesis with the situation in the Transvaal.' I said to them, 'You consider that you should have equal rights also?' They replied, 'Yes!' I said, 'Then I will alter it, if you like, to equal rights for every civilised man south of the Zambesi.' That is my view. I accepted this view, in conjunction with Mr. Hofmeyr before we parted, on the basis of franchise, of which no man, whether black or white, if he possesses the qualifications of education, property, or work, shall be deprived of his rights."

The "Cape Times" of August 3, 1898, in a leading article headed "Mr. Rhodes's Message," dealt thus with this speech:—"The Klipdam message derives further advantage from the fact that it enabled Mr. Rhodes to clear away certain misconceptions in regard to his own attitude towards the more enlightened and progressive coloured and native people of this Colony. When he came down from the north two years ago, Mr. Rhodes uttered that rousing battle cry of 'Equal rights for every white man south of the Zambesi.' The Bond saw its chance . . and straightway made friends with the coloured and native population . . but none knew better than the Bond leaders that Mr. Rhodes never meant that he wished to treat the coloured population as a race of helots. . . When he used the word 'white,' he did so 'in antithesis with the situation in the Transvaal.' It will, of course, be claimed that Mr. Rhodes's later speeches represent a volte face upon this question of the treatment of the coloured people. Of course, they do nothing of the kind. Mr. Rhodes's record upon franchise and kindred matters,

which, after all, may be regarded as affording sufficient test of sincerity, proves conclusively that colour, as colour, in no way influences his attitude. He introduced no colour distinction into his Franchise and Ballot Act of a few years ago. The standard of qualification is the same for both white and black, and, says Mr. Rhodes, no man possessing those qualifications of education, property, or work shall be deprived of his vote."

Surely there is no need further to labour the question whether Mr. Rhodes included the civilised native along with the coloured and white people in his formula of "equal rights for all civilised men," but I may point out further that had he been opposed to any native having the franchise he would not have taken over the

CAPE FRANCHISE LAWS IN RHODESIA,

as he did.

Mr. Bell's quotations from Mr. Rhodes's speech on the Glen Grey Bill are not all to the point. The sentence, "I hold that the native should be apart from the white man and not mixed with him," referred only to the proposed native areas in Glen Grey; and the quotation beginning, "We fail utterly when we put the natives on an equality with ourselves," was spoken in reference to the proposed principle of primogeniture or entail in the land tenure provisions of the Bill. In this very Glen Grey speech Mr. Rhodes said, "I have not interfered with the native voting powers at all," meaning that the Bill left them as to the franchise where they were before.

Mr. Bell argues that the native is not fit to have the franchise: (1) because he belongs to a lower race than the white man, (2) because the negro race has never achieved anything great in the way of civilisation, and (3) because the men of mark of the present day amongst the negroes in America are not pure negroes, but have an admixture of white blood. I have no means at hand of ascertaining how far the last statement is correct, but I can scarcely believe that the other than white persons who have graduated in the United States since the granting of the franchise are all of mixed blood. Here is the list of them:—2,292 normal graduates, 561 classical graduates, 210 graduates in theology, 244 in law, 225 in medicine, 26 in pharmacy, 19 in dentistry; and I remember a report of the board of examiners of Atlanta University, to the effect that the blackest of the students were not a whit behind the mixed bloods in scholarship Even in South Africa we have talented pure-blooded negroes, like Mr. Peregrino, who are living witnesses against the statement advanced.

But, even if we allow that the facts are as alleged, I reply as follows: (1) Our Bantu tribes are not pure negroes, but a mixed race, possibly with little negro in them at all, and certainly differing from that race in a great many characteristics, the likelihood being, as Mr. Van Oordt has ably pointed out, that they are of Semitic origin. (2) Is it so certain that no negroes have ever left their mark on the history of the world? Leaving Egyptian history out of the question, what about the vast empire of Songhay, in the Western Soudan, the home of the negro races, described in the book entitled "A Tropical

Dependency," by Lady Lugard (Flora Shaw)—an empire which flourished in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries under the wise and intelligent rule of a black man as Emperor, Askia the Great, whose territories extended from Lake Chad to the Atlantic? (3) If the natives be a lower race, is there not all the more reason for the civilised race to welcome to the possession of equal civil and political rights or privileges those individuals of that race who by painful effort work themselves up to the general civilisation level of the white race, even if not to its highest levels? Commonsense, reason, and justice answer in the affirmative.

Mr. Bell accepts the

DEFINITION OF THE WORD "NATIVE"

as suggested by the South African Native Affairs Commission, and by so doing he includes "half-castes and their descendants by natives" in the category of natives. How does he dovetail this with his advocacy of political privileges for the coloured man? Is the coloured man, half of whose blood is European, to be refused the franchise, and only one who has more than 50 per cent. of such blood in his veins to be enfranchised? How and by whom is this matter of the amount of European blood to be determined? What about the differences in colour and type which are to be found in children of the same half-caste family? Again, has Mr. Bell considered that this plan of his will place the greatest temptation and inducements before half-castes and natives to obtain an admixture of European blood in their offspring, whether by lawful marriage or

otherwise, and thus the evil which Mr. Bell deprecates of sexual intercourse between the races will be a hundredfold intensified and multiplied?

The argument that, if political privileges are granted to civilised natives, social equality and intermarriage between such natives and Europeans must necessarily follow is a bogie which need frighten no one. In the Transkeian territories there are more native voters as compared with European than anywhere else, but I have never heard of these voters setting up claims to social equality, nor of intermarriage between them and the whites, and there certainly is less illicit sexual intercourse between the races there than in any other part of South Africa. Amongst Europeans in general there are many grades or sections of people all equally eligible for the franchise, but this fact has not been found to wipe out social distinctions or cause intermarriage between these sections, each of which keeps to its own station in social life, and so it is and will be with the civilised native and the European. Social distinctions tend to settle themselves without the aid of Constitutions and Acts of Parliament.

Mr. Bell fears that if the native be granted the franchise, he will eventually get the upper hand and dominate the European race. This is, after all, the bedrock reason for the opposition shown by most people to the enfranchisement of natives, and the rest is chiefly bunkum. But surely, if the native be, as alleged, of so low a race as to be almost incapable of civilisation, the Caucasian ought to be able to hold his own against him. We have, however, 50 years' experience of the

native franchise in the Cape Colony to go by, and that experience does not go to substantiate Mr. Bell's fears.

CAPE DATA.

In the 16 years from 1891 to 1907 (the data prior to that time are scarcely obtainable), the European electorate increased from 52,856 to 129,350—i.e., by 76,494, or 145 per cent.—while the other than European electorate increased from 22,060 to 22,785—i.e., by 725, or only 3¼ per cent. If the coloured and Malay vote, amounting to about 12,700, be classed with the European, as Mr. Bell suggests, it would increase that vote to 142,050, while the pure native and Hottentot vote would stand at about 10,000. The proportionate strength of the pure native vote as compared with the European in 1903 was as 7½ is to 100, and in 1907 as 6½ is to 100.

In Tembuland, with its enormous native population of nearly half a million and its small European population of a few thousands, the 1907 lists show 2,274 European voters and an increase of 247 or more than 11 per cent. on the 1905 list, and 1,034 other than European voters with an increase of only nine, i.e., they have virtually remained stationary. All the experience of the Cape Colony goes to show that the European electorate increases, and will increase, more rapidly than that comparatively small section of civilised natives who are or will be able to qualify for the franchise under the Cape qualifications. Another fact must be borne in mind—namely, that the native electors have never yet united or voted together in any election, but have been just as much divided politically as European voters are.

No one in his senses supposes that the possession of the franchise is the only or primary medium for the uplifting of the mass of the natives; nevertheless the prospect of becoming eligible to attain to the political standing of the white man will prove a potent incentive to the semi-civilised native to increased industry, material progress, genuine mental development, and the attainment of real civilisation, and it should therefore form an integral part of any plans for his uplifting, in addition to some simple kind of representation for that portion of the race which has not reached the stage of such eligibility.

THE CHIEF FACTORS

which are necessary for the uplifting of the native races to a state of real civilisation may be enumerated as follows:—(1) The unhindered spread of Christianity and elementary education amongst them. (2) Unmolested possession either on communal or individual tenure of the land which they now occupy. (3) The gradual substitution of individual tenure in place of communal occupation. (4) The gradual substitution of the power of the Magistrate for that of the chief. (5) The discouragement of polygamy, witchcraft, and other heathen practices and ceremonies. (6) The right to own landed property individually and to get a title for it. (7) The gradual substitution of European law in place of native law. (8) Facilities for industrial, agricultural, and scholastic training, and encouragement towards development in these directions. (9) The establishment of a system of local self-go-

vernment with the help of Government officials. (10) The granting of some simple form of representation in the Legislatures of the country to the general mass of natives. (11) The granting of the Parliamentary franchise to natives who possess certain civilisation and educational qualifications, and who live in electoral districts. The granting of the franchise to really civilised natives is the legitimate and logical conclusion of the uplifting process—the top stone in the edifice of native development—and to refuse it to those who already are qualified for it vitiates the whole plan of the building from the outset.

THE GREAT PRACTICAL FACT

stares us in the face that some of the native people have in our days become civilised and educated, are living like Europeans, and compare favourably in industry, intelligence, and moral qualities, not only with the coloured or half-caste people, but with a large proportion of the European population. It therefore is the acme of injustice to refuse political privileges to such persons, merely because the mass of the people to whom they belong are still living in barbarism; and, further, it is the acme of unstatesmanlike folly to thrust these men back into the mass of barbarism from which they have emerged, instead of holding the door open to them to enjoy the political freedom and privileges possessed by civilised Europeans, and thus become not only a blessing as pioneers to their own race, but a source of strength to ours.

A suggestion has been put forward by the Johannesburg correspondent of the

"Daily Telegraph," that, failing the establishment of a high franchise with high qualifications for black and white throughout British South Africa, the manhood suffrage for Europeans which obtains in the Transvaal and O.R.C. should become universal, as an acknowledgment of the superior claim of the white man to be a highly civilised race, provided that a civilisation franchise with somewhat high qualifications, founded on those of the Cape Colony, is extended to all natives who are British subjects and possess these qualifications.

While I am not in favour of the principle of manhood suffrage, believing that those who are allowed a say in the governing of the country should have some stake in it, still, as it has already been bestowed on Europeans in the Transvaal and O.R.C., and is likely to be desired by Europeans elsewhere, and as it is impossible to bestow it on natives, most of whom are not civilised, the above proposed compromise deserves consideration. It may afford

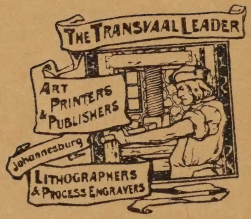
A COMMON MEETING GROUND

for those who at present are in opposite camps on this franchise question; but the civilised natives and their friends will naturally refuse to accept of such a compromise unless the following provisions form part and parcel of it:—(1) That the extension of manhood suffrage to Europeans in all the South African Colonies shall be dependent on the extension throughout British South Africa of a civilisation franchise for natives. (2) That the civilisation qualifications demanded, though possibly

higher than those existing in the Cape Colony at present, shall not be so high as to be prohibitive. (3) That natives whose names are already upon the list of registered voters in the Cape Colony shall not at any time be disfranchised, as such, on account of any higher qualifications which may be demanded from other native electors in the future. (4) That the principle of civilisation franchise qualifications for natives shall apply not only to the franchise of each Colony, but also to any Federal or National Franchise that may be established. Evenhanded justice to all men is the foundation of true national greatness and prosperity, and evenhanded justice demands that, in any scheme or constitution for a federal or unified South Africa, the principle shall be maintained that, whatever political disabilities may fairly be attached to a state of barbarism, neither the colour of a man's skin nor the fact of his belonging to a certain race shall suffice to debar any British subject from eligibility for the possession of civil rights and political privileges.—I am, etc.,

THEO. L. SCHREINER.

Matjesfontein, Cape Colony, Dec. 31.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